DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 472 732 PS 031 000

AUTHOR	Galinsky, Ellen
TITLE	Navigating Work and Family: Hands-On Advice for Working Parents.
INSTITUTION	Families and Work Inst., New York, NY.
ISBN	ISBN-1-888324-36-8
PUB DATE	2002-00-00
NOTE	39p.; The printing and distribution of this booklet were made possible by a generous grant from ARAMARK Work/Life Partnerships to the Work-Life 2002 Conference, "Work-Life Challenges in a Changed World" co-sponsored by Families and Work Institute and The Conference Board. This booklet is based on similar articles originally published by Lifetime Television on their web site.
AVAILABLE FROM	Families and Work Institute, 267 Fifth Avenue, 2nd Floor, New York, NY 100167503. Tel: 212-465-2044; Web site: http://www.familiesandwork.org.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS
DESCRIPTORS	Coping; Emotional Adjustment; *Employed Parents; *Family Work Relationship; Guilt; *Parent Child Relationship; Parent Materials; *Parents; Stress Management

ABSTRACT

This booklet provides suggestions to help parents balance their work and family lives. Suggestions relate to the following areas: (1) sharing work with children; (2) coping with guilt; (3) dealing with children calling parents at work; (4) leaving work stress at work; (5) avoiding overscheduling for children; (6) dealing with after-work socializing; (7) dealing with resentful co-workers; (8) managing summer vacation; (9) staying connected while at work; (10) using constructive discipline with children; and (11) taking care of oneself. (KB)

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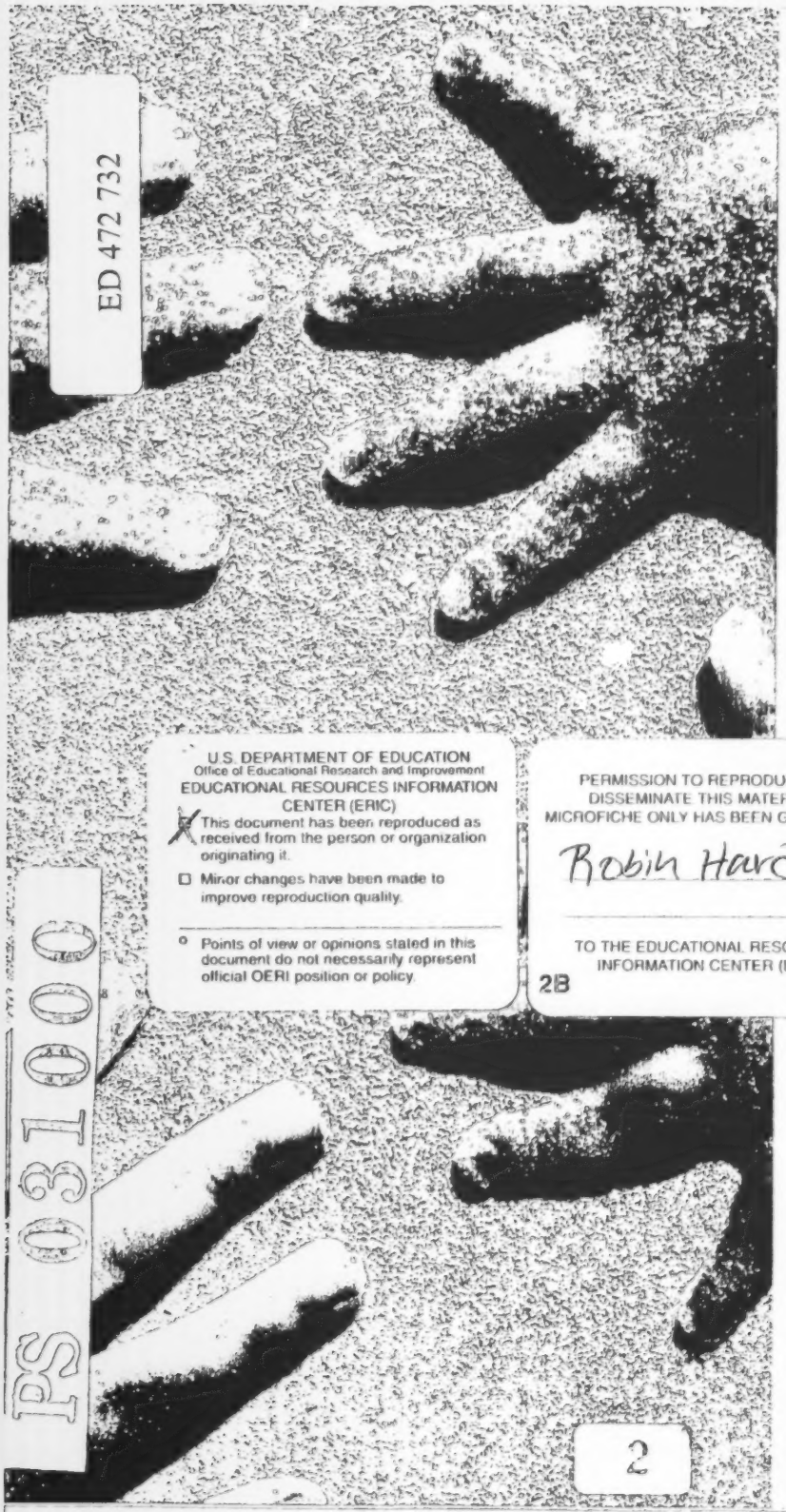

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Navigating Work and Family

Hands-on Advice for Working Parents

Ellen Galinsky

Families and Work Institute

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Acknowledgements

ARAMARK Work/Life Partnerships

The printing and distribution of this booklet were made possible by a generous grant from ARAMARK Work/Life Partnerships to the Work-Life 2002 Conference, "Work-Life Challenges in a Changed World" co-sponsored by Families and Work Institute and The Conference Board.

Thanks to the staff of Families and Work Institute, including Carol Bryce-Buchanan for helping to develop this project, Deb Stahl for her invaluable contributions as conference coordinator, Erin Brownfield for overseeing production, editing and photo research for this publication, John Boose for his excellent graphic design work, and Carter McJunkin for his proofreading skills.

This booklet is based on similar articles originally published by Lifetime Television on their Web site. Thanks to Pam Kruger for her editorial advice.

Dear Parents,

I am very pleased to share with you some hands-on strategies for navigating work and family life. These strategies are drawn from the research we have conducted at the Families and Work Institute over the years.

Navigating work and family life. Why not use the word that almost everyone else uses—"balancing" work and family life?

The word balancing and so many other words we use—and so much of the way we think about work and family life—are out of synch with what we have learned from research. So it is my hope that these strategies not only help you manage the joys and challenges of the life you lead on and off the job, but also help reframe how you talk and think about these issues.

For example, balance implies a scale where work and family life ought to be equal. It also implies that if you pay attention to your home life, you are taking away from your work life and vice versa. An either/or word—a zero-sum game like so many other concepts we use about work and family—work versus home, quality time versus quantity time, child care versus parent care and so forth.

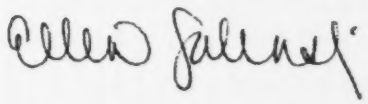
Our research reveals that these ways of thinking and talking set up false dichotomies. We find that if you have a good work life it can enhance your family life—you go home in a better mood and with more energy for your family. Likewise, if you have a good family life, it can enhance your work life.

So I suggest the word navigate. First, navigating is an ongoing process where work and family are no longer separate and distinct. Second, there can be good moments and stormy moments when you are navigating, just like in life. And third, if you

know where you want to go, that is, if you are fairly clear about your priorities and you are intentional about them, you are more likely to get there.

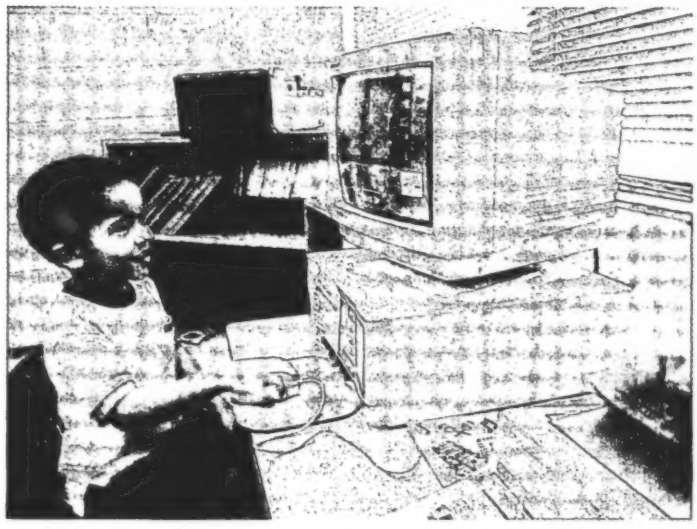
Many more of my hands-on strategies, drawn from our research, are available in the "Ask FWI" series on our Web site, www.familiesandwork.org. We are deeply grateful to ARAMARK Work/Life Partnerships for sponsoring this booklet and making them available to you.

Wishing you much joy in working and parenting,



Ellen Galinsky

Sharing Your Work with Your Children



One of the most surprising findings from my book, *Ask the Children*, is that many kids don't know a lot about the work their parents do. I found that among children eight through 18 years old, only 66 percent know a lot about their mothers' work and 54 percent know a lot about their fathers' work. In fact, I found that employed parents are not very intentional in talking to their kids about work. We are more likely to talk AROUND the kids, not WITH them. So what children are learning is often picked up indirectly—from overheard conversations, from passing comments, from watching us.

When we have one of those inevitable bad days, our kids become like detectives, trying to piece together the evidence: "Why is Mom upset? Did something bad happen?" Or, "Why is Dad so tired? Is he sick?"

A second surprising finding is that only two in five children think their parents like their work a lot while three in five employed parents say that they do like their work a lot. "I realize that I have been coming home and spouting off about what's wrong at work," one dad explains. "I almost never talk about what's going well."

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A mother of two young children has a different explanation. "Out of guilt, I have been telling my kids that I wish I didn't have to go to work. One of my children's teachers heard me do this and said, 'You DO like your job! You are shortchanging your children by not sharing your work with your children.'"

Here's how you can share your work with your children:

- Arrange for them to visit you at your workplace. Introduce them to co-workers and, if they have time, ask your co-workers to explain what they do. Perhaps you could even have your son or daughter help you photocopy papers or stuff envelopes. If your children can't visit, take a photograph of your workplace so they have a visual image of where you spend your days.

- Tell them why you work. Sure, most of us work for money, but there's usually more to it than that. So let kids know the full array of reasons you do what you do. Even if you are mainly working for the paycheck, explain why you're in that situation and what you hope for yourself or for them in the future. One mom who worked in a fast-food restaurant, for instance, told her kids that there were "a lot more things for them to do than work at a fast-food chain. I tell them they can be anything they want to be, as long as they keep focused on it."

- Talk about your bad days AND your good days. Explain what you find interesting about your work, and what lessons you've learned. If you've had a bad day, be direct and honest about it, remembering to tell the kids that it isn't their fault that you're upset. Talk at a level they can understand. For a young child, you can say, "I did have a bad day. You have those days sometimes. But I figured out what went wrong and I am going to try to make sure that tomorrow

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is better." With an older child, you can explain a bit more about how you have resolved the problem, but be sure not to burden them. And if you need to take some "time out" to calm down, that's a concept they can understand.

- Take advantage of life lessons. When you have guests in your home, ask them to talk about their work so your children will hear about different occupations. Some parents like to use their work stories to teach kids how important it is to be able to get along with a wide variety of people. Another parent I spoke with stressed how important it is to not just complain about problems, but to try to fix them. The key: Always be conscious of the messages you're sending.

Work does not have to compete with parenting. As a number of young people told me when I was interviewing them for *Ask the Children*, they want their mothers and fathers to like their work—just not more than they love them.

Coping with Guilt

Do you feel guilty? You are certainly not alone. One father describes what makes him feel guilty:

> *"I sit down to finally do something I want to do. My children are like homing pigeons—immediately in my face with a million things they need me to do NOW. Rather than handle it in a matter-of-fact way, I get angry and then am consumed with guilt."*

A mother says:

> *"Whenever my son whines, I worry that I'm neglecting him, that he wouldn't be whining if I were home with him all day."*

Another mother describes herself as "guilt propelled"—she feels guilty when she's with her children because of something she has to get done at work, and guilty when she's at work because she misses her children.

If you feel guilty, don't simply try to banish it—listen to it. Guilt is like a fever, a symptom that tells us that something is wrong. It also gives us a chance to do something about what's causing the guilt. I learned this from the research I conducted for my book, *The Six Stages of Parenthood*. Now I see guilt differently than most people. Guilt is not simply an emotion to be banished—it is to be understood. Here are some suggestions that come from these studies:

- Figure out what is making you feel guilty. Guilt arises when there is a disconnect between what is happening and what we expect—a clash between our expectations and reality. For example, the father who yells at his children when he is trying to find some time to himself feels guilty because he expects himself to be someone who handles problems with his children without getting angry.

- Ask yourself if your expectation is realistic or not. The father who is yelling might decide that his expectation of handling discipline issues without anger is an expectation he wants to hold onto, a realistic expectation. On the other hand, the mother with the whining son might realize that her friends' children are whining too—it's the kids' age, not necessarily the fact that their mothers work. So the expectation that her son wouldn't whine if she were home with him all day may be an unrealistic one.

- Make changes so that your expectations align more closely with reality. This entails either changing your expectation to be more realistic or changing yourself to live up to your expectation. The father who doesn't want to get angry can use any number of techniques to stop himself from getting upset. He can forewarn his children that he is taking some time for himself. He can use a code word—a silly word that he and his children agree on in advance that means he is getting upset and, like his children, needs some "time out" to calm down. He can have a meeting with his children and problem-solve how to avoid these situations in the future.

- Don't give into guilt—manage it. Guilt is a useful emotion when we use it as a sign that something is wrong and then deal with the underlying issue. Guilt only becomes problematic when we give into it—for example, when guilt causes us to buy our children things to make up for the fact that we are not with them, instead of figuring out what is making us guilty and making changes so that our expectations are more closely aligned with reality. Believe it or not, coping with guilt leads us to grow as adults. For it is through reconciling our expectations with reality that adult development takes place.

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Kids Calling Work: How Much Is Too Much?

Recently, I was asked this question by an employed mother: "My two boys, ages 10 and 14, start calling me at my office literally from the moment they get home from school, and the calls continue until I leave work. It's starting to get on my boss's nerves—who's usually very patient—not to mention my nerves. I think they're old enough to manage being on their own for a few hours, but they phone when they're fighting, when they need help with homework or when they just want my opinion on something. How can I cut back their calls without leaving them on their own too much?"

The process of parenting involves teaching your children how to handle increasing responsibility, as they grow ready to do so. Here are some suggestions:

- Spell out when they should and shouldn't call you. Tell them, for instance, that they need to LEARN to resolve their differences with each other. Set aside some time to brainstorm situations that arise and how they might handle them. Ask them to keep track of whether these ideas work or not. For example, they might decide to go into different rooms in the house when they fight and this

idea works. Or when they need help with their homework, they can do as much as possible, then mark any problem questions with Post-its so you can help them when you come home. Remember you are teaching them how to handle conflict, a skill that far too few adults have!

- Remind them that when they do call, it's extremely important for them to be polite, in case someone other than you answers the phone. Then, post a list of these rules right by the phone, where they'll be sure to see them.

You may also need to set some rules for yourself.

- Don't try to sort out their arguments from work. If one of them calls to report a dispute, tell him that you don't want to hear who started it, but you do want to hear about who resolved it. And be clear about the repercussions of violating the rules, whether it's no TV for the rest of the evening or going to bed an hour early.

- Respect your work time. It's important for kids to be able to reach out to you at work, but they also need to understand that you have tasks you are responsible for doing. You won't be harming them if you limit excessive calls, as long as you let them know how much you care about them, that you're willing to spend time outside of work talking to them and that you're trying to teach them how to behave responsibly. And if you suspect they're calling because they're craving your attention, make an effort to set aside some extra one-on-one time with each child in the evenings and on non-workdays.

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Leaving Work Stress Where It Belongs—at Work

We used to think that technology would free us to have more time with our families. The reality, as we all know, is different. Work has changed from being confined to a specific time and place to being "all the time, every place." Many of us feel that we are drowning in a constant stream of e-mail that knows no boundaries. And cell phones and pagers can add to this stress. In fact, in a recent study from the Families and Work Institute, we found that 41 percent of U.S. employees are using technology to do work for their jobs often or very often during NON-work hours or NON-work days. And we found that employees who feel they are more accessible to their employers than necessary during non-work hours feel much more overworked than those who do not.

There is also no question that jobs have become more demanding. Families and Work Institute's most recent *National Study of the Changing Workforce* indicates that over the past 20 years, there has been a 10 percent increase in the number of employed parents who feel that jobs require them to work "very fast." Currently, 65 percent feel that way. Likewise, there has been a 21 percent increase in those who feel they never have enough time to get everything done. Sixty-five percent are in that boat. And 56 percent feel they have to do too many tasks at the same time at work either often or very often.

So how do we leave work stress at work? Here are some suggestions that come from our studies:

- **Get organized at the end of the workday.** When we dash out of work with lots of things dangling, it is easier to have that angst follow us home. Make a list of what you have to do tomorrow. With a different colored pen, circle the three top priorities. Make sure that you select tasks that are doable and at which you expect to succeed. Feeling that the work for tomorrow is under control—at least somewhat—helps us leave work stress at work.

- **Make a plan to deal with the things that are bothering you.** Maybe your boss excluded you from a meeting, or a co-worker corrected you in front of a client; so before you leave, pause for a few minutes to consider how you'll respond tomorrow. If you're pondering sending your colleague an e-mail, jot down what you'll say before you go home. Or, if you choose to do nothing, figure out how you'll react if the situation occurs again.

- **Deliberately switch out of work mode.** Try meditating at your desk for a few minutes before you leave work. Or do something else that changes your focus. If you commute, listen to books on tape or music on the way home. My son made a tape of Brazilian music for me that he calls the "Happy Driving Tape." No matter how upsetting my day, it is hard to stay frazzled when listening to the upbeat sounds of samba music. A mother of two preschoolers changes her clothes as soon as she gets home. I have always called this the "Mister Rogers" technique. Remember how Fred Rogers always takes his jacket off and puts his sweater and sneakers on at the beginning of "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood?" Changing clothes is symbolic of switching into home mode.

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- Create boundaries around family time. In an era when the lines between work and non-work are blurring, creating your own boundaries can help. Safeguard your sanity by setting up rules, such as no work phone calls until after the kids are in bed. If you need to check and respond to your e-mail or voice mail from home, establish a set time to do it every night, and make sure it's convenient for you and your family. If you know for sure that you'll be at your computer or on the phone from 10:00 to 11:00 each evening, you'll be less likely to stress out about the work you need to do while you're with your kids.

So much of leaving work stress where it belongs—at work—is being conscious that this stress will follow you home unless you make an effort to deal with the loose ends that are bothering you. Then give yourself a window of time and develop rituals to make the transition home. If you do this, at home you will be better at being both emotionally and physically present when you are with your family.

Are Your Children Overscheduled?

Do kids' schedules rival those of over-committed adults? Are we pushing them too hard?

Research has confirmed that today's children do have less free time than kids did in the past. In a national study, researchers at the University of Michigan compared the experiences of children ages 3 through 11 and found that as of 1997, children spent approximately 30 minutes less per day in unstructured play and outdoor activities than their peers in 1981. In fact, free time—the time left over after eating, sleeping, being in school, and personal grooming—has decreased from 40 percent of a child's day to 25 percent.

So what does this mean for our kids? It means they're spending more time at school, and are also participating in more structured activities, such as group sports. There are many reasons for this change: For one thing, employed parents want to ensure that their children are occupied, safe and supervised while they're at work; others may worry that if they don't provide extracurricular activities for their children, they will fall behind others, they won't learn as much, and they won't have impressive "resumes" for college and later in life.

This is a very important issue in our times. So here are some guidelines that can be useful:

- Make sure your child has real downtime. This is the most important suggestion of all. In the study I conducted for my book, *Ask the Children*, I found that children crave time to be with their parents when they are not preoccupied with activities, when they are just being together, just hanging out. Studies also show that it is important for young people to learn to use their own initiative to fill up boring times and not always depend on others to amuse them. No child thrives living on a constant treadmill. And all children prosper when they learn to take responsibility and have support for pursuing their own interests.

- When you choose activities for or with your children, make sure you are selecting activities that extend your child's interests. In a recent study, Families and Work Institute found that less than half of young people in the fifth through the twelfth grades gave their parents top marks for "supporting my interests and getting involved in the things that interest me." By doing so, we are keeping the joy in learning alive. So if your child has always liked running, jumping, and doing cartwheels, maybe gymnastics would be a good idea.

- Make sure that your child is old enough for the experience. Although your preschooler shows an interest in and aptitude for music, she may be too young for formal lessons. But she might benefit from musical experiences in singing, in playing with lots of instruments, or in movement exercises.

- If your child professes not to like the activity, figure out what is going on. Perhaps the activity is too structured or is being taught in an inappropriate way. If so, change to a different teacher or better class or a different activity.

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- Also look at the severity of your child's protests and the way he typically moves into new experiences. If he often complains at the onset of something new, but ends up loving it, gently remind him of this pattern and say that you want him to give the activity a fair chance.

- Ask yourself if you want your child to participate for the right reasons. This is very important. The activity should be for your child, NOT you. If you're scheduling ballet for your daughter because you've always wished you'd taken lessons, but she'd rather play basketball, respect her choices and focus on what your child does like. You are not your child.

- Decide how important you think this activity is. For example, you know that you want your son to learn to swim for his own safety, but it's fine to decide that this may not be the time if he seems miserable. Tell him that in a year or so you will find a better program and try again.

- Engage in activities with your child. In my study, *Ask the Children*, I found that children have more positive feelings about their parents when they participate in activities together. Likewise, the University of Michigan study found that children who engaged in more parent-child activities, and have caring parents with more positive expectations for them, are less aggressive, less withdrawn and seem happier. So be sure to pick activities that you enjoy too!

Dealing with After-Work Socializing

Colleagues at some workplaces hang out together over drinks or dinner or bike, golf, or play tennis on the weekends. This can create a dilemma for employed parents whose family responsibilities make participating difficult. One parent said, "I turned down a few of my co-workers' invitations to come along, and now they rarely invite me anymore. I feel out of the loop, but I also want to see my kids for more than a half-hour each night."

It's tough when you want to be one of the group but you've got your own personal group—your family—depending on you at home. Here are a few strategies to help you be social with your co-workers while still fulfilling your family obligations:

- **Add some social time to the hours from 9 to 5.** Gather a group of co-workers and organize regular lunches. Or suggest an informal off-site staff meeting, during which everyone gets a chance to brainstorm away from ringing telephones and persistent e-mail messages. In both cases, you can still conduct business— but it's also more likely that you'll be able to get to know each other better.

- **Socialize selectively.** Instead of going out with colleagues on a regular basis, ask to be informed in advance about important events, such as a birthday celebration, and attend just those. Or perhaps you can have planned periodic outings, say, the first Tuesday of every month.

- **Cultivate good relationships with your co-workers.** Ask about their interests; acknowledge them when they make a good point at a meeting or pull off a

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tough assignment. The stronger your relationships with colleagues, the more likely that you will be in the loop when decisions are made or assignments are given.

- Keep in mind the other ways you contribute at work. If you're productive, constructive and focused on your organization's success, you should be valued for your work contributions, regardless of whether you hang out with coworkers after work.

Dealing with Resentful Co-Workers

Recently, books and magazine articles have suggested that there is a growing backlash against parents in the workplace. Although much has been written about how people who don't have children resent having to pick up slack for colleagues who do, Families and Work Institute research indicates that this is definitely not the norm. In our *National Study of the Changing Workforce*, we found that an overwhelming 83 percent said they wouldn't resent having to do occasional extra work to accommodate the family needs of a colleague. What's more, there was no statistical difference between parents and non-parents in feeling resentful.

But what if you are one of the few whose childless co-workers make cracks about employed parents—commenting on how lucky you are to leave work early, when you're really leaving to take a sick child to the doctor or to meet with a teacher? One parent experiencing this subtle criticism said, "They have no clue how hard it is to manage. Their comments make me furious. Should I confront them?"

Here are a few strategies to smooth over workplace resentment:

- Don't even try to make them understand how hard it is to be an employed parent. It may be a cliché, but it's true: You can't know what it's like to have kids—the joys, the pressures, the frustrations—until you have them yourself.
- Make a plan. Work with your colleagues to create a plan in advance for handling how work will get done in your absence. People are less likely to be peeved if you aren't giving projects to them at the last minute. And always be sure to thank them if they do cover for you.

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- Let them know that you are willing to help them out when they need it. All of us have outside priorities in our lives. By pitching in when a single co-worker needs to leave early to care for an elderly parent, do volunteer work or just go to a class, you'll make it clear that you respect his or her life outside of the job.

If you continue to hear snide remarks, however, it may be best to respond directly. "I really don't like to hear you say this. I want to work in a place where all of us can help each other." If you emphasize this—and follow up with action—you may be able to make your workplace a better place for everyone.

Managing Summer Vacation: When School's Out, but You're Not

For many employed parents, once the final school bell rings and your kids are free for the summer, the pangs of guilt begin.

It starts toward the close of the school year—your son starts musing about his myriad plans for the summer (many of which involve you) and the volume on your guilt is turned up even higher.

During the school year, you probably accept the fact that school is the work of children, just like your job is the work of adults. But when the summer comes, it can feel different. Many of us have idealized (and maybe not so realistic) memories of summer—sleeping late, hanging out by the community swimming pool, playing softball in a dusty lot, waiting for the Good Humor truck in the evening. How can those fantasies fit with the reality that your work in the summer seems just as hectic as it does in the winter? Some suggestions:

- Talk to your children about their own expectations for summer. Even if you have already made their regular summertime arrangements, if you talk with

them, you may unearth expectations they have been harboring. If left unfulfilled, these can lead to problems or conflicts later on. If pursued, they can enrich your kids' summer. If your preschooler expresses an interest in arts and crafts, see if the local youth museum or art center has summer classes for young children in the evenings or Saturdays. If your school-age daughter is interested in computers, some of the schools in town may run short-term intensive computer camps. Some communities have "summer of service" programs, where teens can do important community volunteer work.

- Talk with your children about their expectations of you. What would they most like to do with you? Would your daughter like a day's outing at an amusement park or zoo? Can you take a Friday off to go on this trip? Would your son like you to watch his swim meets? Can you go to work early and leave mid-afternoon so you can attend? If your schedule is inflexible, you could plan something else your kids would enjoy like dinner picnics at the park or a family softball tournament.

- Assess your own expectations. What are your expectations of the summer? Are they realistic or not? For example, are you expecting to slow down but a work crisis is looming? It's better to try to head unrealistic expectations off at the pass, rather than find yourself frustrated and angry that things aren't going as you hoped. Our research has found that the clash between expectations and reality is what causes parental angst. Can you change the situation to allow a more leisurely summer by prioritizing, trying to get things done in advance, or delegating some of your responsibilities? Or should you accept the possibility that it may be a crazy time and you can slow down more in the fall?

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- Begin a new at-home tradition. In my research for *Ask the Children*, I asked children what they would remember most about this period in their life. I also asked parents to guess what their kids would say. Many adults guessed the big family events, like trips. Many children said these are nice, but what they would most remember are the small family traditions that go on, week in and week out. So create some new family traditions—like taking photos and putting them together in an album, reading together as a family every night, making Sunday breakfast together, or taking a walk after dinner.

- Try to live in the moment. Given how much planning it takes to manage work and family responsibilities, the temptation is to live in the future, always planning ahead. It is important to do this, but it's equally important to enjoy the moment you are in. So when you are rushing past beautiful summer flowers, stop and admire them with your school-age child. Enjoy the way your toddler watches a caterpillar move across the sidewalk. Watch the summer sunset with your teenagers and name all the things you see in the cloud formations. These small moments will also become the treasured memories of summer for your kids.

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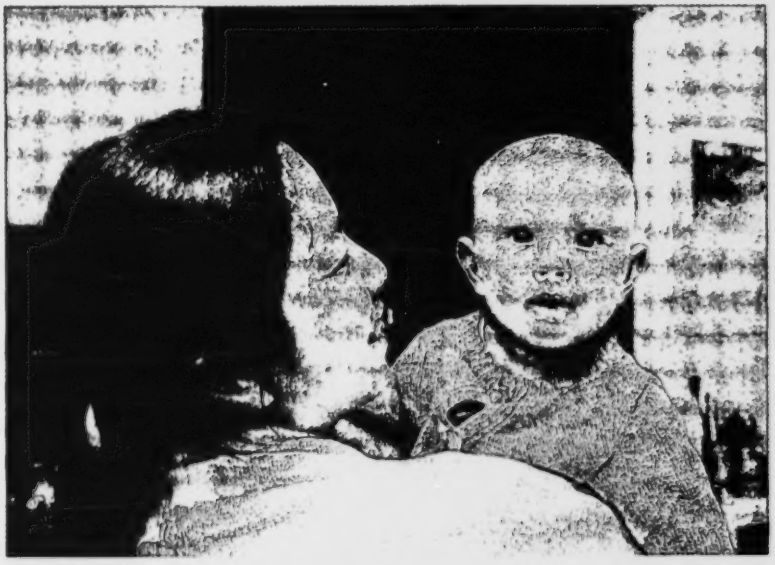
Staying Connected while at Work



There's no question about it: Leaving our children when we go off to work each morning can be wrenching for everyone involved. No matter how much we love what we do—and no matter how eager the kids are to head off to school—making that transition can be difficult.

For my book, *The Six Stages of Parenthood*, I interviewed the mother of a newborn who said she had such a powerful fear of being separated from her baby that she fantasized she was an elephant mother, ready to "charge through the jungle because she heard her babies squeal." While such anxiety is perfectly natural—especially for a new parent who worries that his or her children aren't safe when they are apart, there are ways to make the daily separations less acute for parents and kids. Here are tips on forging feelings of connection, even when you and your children are apart.

For toddlers:

- Let your child select something of yours to keep with him or her while you are apart. You can suggest that your child "pick something that will remind you of

me that you keep with you until I come back from work." One toddler selected his mother's handkerchief with the smell of her hand lotion still on it, while another chose a photograph of his father.

- Make a tape of yourself reading a story or singing a song to your child. Your voice on a tape reading a cherished story by Dr. Seuss or another favorite author will be comforting.

For preschool children:

- Leave a note for your child in his or her lunch box or school bag with stickers of favorite characters or drawings of family members.

For school-age children:

- Make the note that you send to school with your child more elaborate. Have a guessing game in it: "Can you find your name hidden in this picture?"

For teens:

- Set up a regular time to talk. Sharing your days and theirs will help bridge the time apart.

And if you travel:

- Make a calendar of the days that you are going to be away. Your child can cross out each day until you return.
- Leave a note for your child to open for each day that you will be away. You can leave clever notes such as, "I am thinking of something in your room that is red and fuzzy. What is it?"

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- Start a collection for your child and bring back a memento from each trip. You can find things that are no cost or very inexpensive such as pretty rocks or a pencil with the name of the city you are visiting.
- Send a postcard to your child for each day that you are away. These postcards may even arrive after you have returned home and then you can read them together.
- For older children, use fax or e-mail so that you can look at their homework. Alternatively, they can read you their homework assignment over the telephone.

All of these techniques let your children know that although you are not physically together, you are "there for them." In the process, you are teaching your children how to deal with feelings of loss as well as how to venture out more self-confidently when you are apart.

Constructive Discipline

A mother of two asked me recently if parents today—especially employed parents—have more trouble disciplining their children. She said:

"It seems like we working parents put so much energy into empathizing with our kids and trying to have quality time that we don't draw the line enough. It does take more energy to draw the line with kids than to just roll over when they cry."

While researchers have not looked at whether parents are having a harder time disciplining today than in the past, there is strong evidence that many parents—in both dual-earner and traditional families—are not doing so well in disciplining their children. And this is according to their children!

In the study that I conducted for *Ask the Children*, I asked kids in the third through the twelfth grades to assess their parents on 12 parenting skills, like "spending time talking with me," "making me feel important and loved," and "knowing what is really going on in my life." The very lowest assessment given to mothers was for "controlling her temper when I do something that makes her angry," and it was the second lowest assessment for fathers. So, according to my study, we may "roll over" when they fuss, cry, or whine, but if they keep at it, we blow up.

Common sense tells us that there is no magic bullet that will make discipline problems go away—kids need to contest their parents as a part of growing up. However, research offers insight on techniques we can use that make it more likely that our children will comply with our wishes.

For my book, *The Preschool Years*, we reviewed the research on what adults do that makes it more likely that their kids—of all ages—will comply rather than contest them. Here are some suggestions to get kids to do what you want them to do:

- Focus your child's attention on the task. Studies find that children are more cooperative when they are given a warning about what you expect. It's better to say, "Take five minutes to finish your drawing and then it will be time to leave the house," than to swoop in with, "We're leaving right this second."
- Use neutral, positive or reflective language. It's better to say, "Try putting just a few peas on your spoon so they all don't fall off," rather than, "You eat like a slob."
- Use reasoning. Children will be more likely to go along with you if you say, "We need to hurry up to get to the store before it closes" rather than, "Hurry up, slowpoke."
- Give your children limited tasks. Rather than saying, "Clean your room," say, "Pick up your books first."
- Give limited choices and make sure those choices are real. Parents can get into trouble by implying something is a choice when it isn't. Don't say, "Would you like to go to bed?" or, "Wash your face, okay?" Better to say, "Would you like to brush your teeth or wash your face first?"

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In addition to getting your children to do something, there are many times when you want to get your children to stop doing something. Here are some suggestions that come from research:

- Use other-oriented discipline. Studies have found that children are more likely to comply when they are aware of the consequences of their behavior and when they learn to empathize with others. So rather than saying, "Don't mess up your brother's room—that's mean," you can say, "Your brother feels very upset when his things are messed up, just like you do when that happens to you."

- Provide alternatives. When discipline is seen as an opportunity to teach, part of the process includes providing alternatives for the unacceptable behavior. So rather than saying, "Stop fighting now," you can say, "You may not hit your sister, but you can tell her how you feel when she eats the food you were saving just for you."

- Provide consequences and follow through. It's better to think through consequences in advance so that you don't end up making threats that in the light of day become unreal. So rather than saying, "You can't watch television for a month," make the consequences related to the so-called crime: "You have to pick up all of the stuff that you threw on the floor."

- Think through "the final no's." You've probably had the experience of finally reaching your limit and saying no in such a way that your kids immediately stop testing you. I call these the "final no's." In fact, you can avoid a long, strung-out process if you say to your kids early on, "This is a final no. You might as well stop pushing me because I mean it."

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- Find ways to control your own temper. At this point in reading these discipline suggestions, you might be saying to yourself, "I already know some of these techniques. The problem is that when my kids misbehave, I get so mad that I lose it." Many parents have found that a "time out" for themselves helps them calm down.

Although we can feel tempted to give in to our kids at the end of a long workday, giving in may encourage them to keep pushing and pushing the limits. Think of discipline as providing the guardrails across a bridge. Kids feel safer if they know what the limits are.

How to Take Care Of Yourself—When Everyone Else's Needs Seem to Come First

Contrary to popular belief, time-crunched employed mothers aren't spending less time on their children these days—they're spending less time on themselves. According to our *National Study of the Changing Workforce*, employed mothers spend an average of 42 fewer minutes a day on themselves than their counterparts did 20 years ago.

What about fathers? They are also working longer hours. No surprise there, but it is perhaps surprising that dads today spend more time with their kids and more time on housework than 20 years ago. And like mothers, fathers have cut back on time for themselves. Over the past 20 years, fathers are spending 54 minutes less on themselves on workdays and 1 hour and 48 minutes less on non-workdays.

When you are this busy, taking time out for your own needs may seem selfish, but Families and Work Institute research finds that employed parents who find some time for themselves feel more successful as parents. You probably know the feeling—you come back from a jog, a movie you enjoyed, or dinner with a good friend with more energy and a greater appreciation for your kids.

So what stands in the way of taking time for yourself? Of course, there's the reality of having just 24 hours in a day and too much to do. In addition, there are a series of assumptions that can stand in the way:

- "I should be able to do it all." I hear this from women all the time. I usually respond, if you're doing it all, you're probably not having it all. You must get

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some help and leave a little time for yourself. Families and Work Institute's recent study, *Feeling Overworked: When Work Becomes Too Much* found that people who feel overworked are less likely to be taking good care of themselves, less likely to report that their health is good or excellent and more likely to lose sleep because of work. So some time for yourself is good for your health.

- "Work time—or family time—*is* my time for myself." I don't agree! Work and family may give you joy, but you're still usually serving others' needs. Just-for-you time means you're just focusing on yourself.
- "It's selfish to do something just for myself." Let's retire the notion that parents should be self-sacrificing saints. Being a mom or dad doesn't mean you should stop taking care of your own needs.
- "My spouse—or kids—should notice that I need time off and offer to give me a break." This attitude will only breed resentment. Your family can't read your mind. If you need time off, share this need. Don't wait until you get annoyed.

Once you've worked at abating the guilt, the second challenge is to actually carve out time for yourself. Here are some suggestions for finding the extra hours:

- Schedule just-for-you time. This shouldn't be one more "to do" on a busy schedule that makes you feel crazy, but an oasis, something to look forward to—perhaps dinner with a friend, movies or a regular exercise class.
- Trade time-off opportunities with your spouse or other adults who help you with the kids. He or she probably needs a respite, just like you do. If you

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support him or her with some time off, this person will be more likely to support you.

- Take advantage of "found" moments. Try to do something small for yourself—something you enjoy—every single day. Keep a good book by your bed to read at night. Take your kids on outings you'll enjoy too, like an outdoor concert in a beautiful setting.

- Be in the moment. One parent I interviewed put it best: "If I'm sitting by the sandbox with my kids, I could feel resentful and think about all the other things I wish I was doing. Or, I can treasure this moment."

- Don't give in to your family's complaints. Your kids might act out; your spouse might give you a hard time. If you're suddenly taking some time for yourself, there may be some resentment. Explore their feelings. Help them understand why you need this break; figure out how to allay their anxieties. Adjusting your needs with those of your family's may take some work, but don't give up. To carve out time for yourself in the midst of work, family and community can feel like a struggle, but it is well worth the effort. At a minimum, it will give you more energy for parenting. At best, it will help you develop new interests and grow—as a person and as a parent.

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ISBN 1-888324-36-8

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